

# Shutesbury Elementary School Library

April 27, 2009

Dear Superintendent Smith:

I have read with great interest your proposal for moving the four school libraries in our district to open-source cataloging and circulation software. I understand the extreme financial situation facing our schools in the coming years and realize every possibility must be explored for savings. However, in the case of the SES library, staying with Follett's Destiny as our library software is the most cost-effective and practical answer.

Currently, two of the district schools use InfoCentre, one uses Spectrum and we use Destiny. There is no sharing of materials between school libraries and each library works autonomously. While we would love to be able to share our resources, this isn't possible due to the distance between schools and the lack of staffing. Therefore each school library is run independently. There is no reason to unify library operations and each school should continue to choose the system that best suits their individual needs.

We purchased Destiny two years ago to replace an outdated Spectrum system that was no longer supported by our equipment. We have made the initial investment in the software and the hardware (server and desktop) to run it and now only accrue yearly charges for technical support and the added TitlePeek feature (an additional program that allows the cover of the book to be displayed in the search results.) It has proven to be a reliable and smooth running system.

Students and staff are pleased with the product. "I love being able to access the catalog from home" has been heard from teachers, parents and students. The visual search feature, which uses colorful icons, combined with TitlePeek, makes finding a book easy for the younger students. Students learn how to navigate the library independently beginning in kindergarten and having an easy to use OPAC (Online Patron Access Catalog) is a key in this process.

The circulation component has allowed us to quickly compile reports and notices, from the age of the collection to overdue slips. The ease of circulation and inventory has helped us decrease the number of lost books by nearly 5% in two years. Technical support is available to answer any questions or problems that arise, which have been few. It is a good, solid product, and it is easy to see why over 60% of schools or school districts in the U.S. use Follett.

Using Destiny to manage the library's resources allows us to meet our goals of enabling our students to become independent library users. It helps teachers to find the right

resources to meet their educational goals. And from a fiscally sound perspective, it has allowed us to reduce the loss of materials.

We are able to:

1. Bring the library to our students 24/7/365 through a web-based catalog
2. Provide an easy to use interface with a visual option for students in grades K-6
3. Display book covers in the catalog (very important with little ones)
4. Quickly and easily catalog new acquisitions as well as websites
5. Utilize excellent tech support
6. Receive updates
7. Place holds on materials and creates a multitude of reports
8. Be part of a large community of users to share ideas and best practices

I feel that Destiny will continue to meet the needs of the SES library for many years to come.

Koha, your proposed replacement, is an interesting product. Free, open-source software, it provides many of the features that Destiny does. Open-source software is a hot trend due to the economy and the flexibility it can offer. The one downfall and this is the deal breaker is that there is no technical support. Without an IT department in our school, we would need to contract out support services, which would be costly. This cost would negate any savings that might be gained. I checked the national library discussion list to see what librarians who were using Koha had to say, and their continued warning was to make sure you had adequate tech services available since this was not something that could be maintained by a novice. All reports seem to indicate that open-source software will continue to grow and develop. While Koha would be a definite consideration for a larger school or district that had the in-house facilities to support it, it would not be an economical choice for our school at this time.

Due to our satisfaction with our current library system, Destiny, and the lack of financial incentive in changing products, I would strongly recommend no change at this time.

I cordially invite you to stop by the library at your convenience to see our system in use by our students. I think you will be convinced that it continues to be the best choice for us.

Thank you,

*Marcia Bernard*

Marcia Bernard, Librarian



# Library Automation Systems

## Destiny

- Successfully used for two years
- Investment in software and hardware already made
- Access the catalog online 24/7/365
- Easy to use for the entire school community
- Kid-friendly interface: even kindergarteners can use it!
- Quick and easy cataloging gets new books out fast
- Excellent technical support
- Used by the majority of school libraries



## Koha

- Open source software
- Free
- Flexible and customizable
- No technical support, must contract it individually
- Not widely used at this time